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Bella Cohen Spewack, age twenty-one, two years before she wrote
her autobiography

Why I Wrote Comedy

BELLA COHEN SPEWACK

Bella Cohen Spewack is best known for her collaboration with her husband, Sam Spewack, and with Cole Porter on Kiss Me, Kate. Bella wrote her autobiography Streets in 1922 in Berlin during her first year of marriage when she was twenty-three years old. Each chapter is headed by one of the many addresses at which she lived as a child growing up in poverty on the Lower East Side of New York City. The following year, "haunted by slum conditions," she was stirred to write a series of articles for the Evening World. The series led to reform in the Rent Laws under Governor Alfred E. Smith and to the first attempt at slum clearance. It was only after four decades and success that she could look back on the unpublished work and ironically rename it "Why I Wrote Comedy." The two sections that appear below are from "Cannon Street," the first chapter of her unedited manuscript.

Cannon Street was the first of the group on the lower East Side that life scooped out for me. It stretches out of Grand Street south past Broome, Delancey, Rivington and Stanton into Houston—a narrow gutter, flanked by narrower sidewalks. On the other side of Grand Street where I used to go Saturday nights to buy my hair ribbons, it ascends like a runway in a theater. At the corner rose the sugary odors of a pie factory.

On the other side of Houston Street, a street of noble width, Cannon Street narrows and narrows until it is but the wink of a blind man's eye: Manhattan Street.

Thousands of people live on Cannon Street, occupying rear houses and front houses from basement to top floor. The houses are sour with the smell of so much crowded human flesh. So many words were spoken that words meant little. Blows meant more.

On this street, I spent the first ten years of my life.

On this street, I learned to fear people.

We landed in New York and were greeted by a short, frail blond man with pink threaded cheeks. He told me that he was my cousin but he was not. My mother and I spent the first night in a bed with two others in a room back of the restaurant kept by Channeh Rosenthal. Her little girl was a waxen famished looking creature



Children of the streets; photograph by Jessie Tarbox Beals
(Community Service Society Papers)

who was always whining for her “mommeh” and sucked her thin thumb. She was older than I was by two years. I remember her sulking jealousy of my red dress.

I could sing well in Hungarian and German and spoke brokenly as well in Roumanian, a smooth, declamatory Yiddish and before long could mutter realistically English oaths. For all these, the patrons of Channeh Rosenthal’s restaurant would pay me in copers which I dutifully handed over to my mother.

My mother did not stay long in Channeh Rosenthal’s restaurant. She went to an employment agency on Fourth Street between Avenue C and B one of a number on the block. The same string of

employment offices exists today—with their blatant blue and white painted signs: SERVANTS, jutting out from the top level of the stores in which they are located.

I grew restive under the enforced waiting of three monotonous days. Mother and I would arrive in the morning, wait until twelve when we would go out and buy an apple from a street peddler, return and wait until four and finally return home. I would play outside by myself or accept overtures from the “Yankee” children after they had teased me to their hearts’ content.

When I grew tired I would sit on the floor of the store and watch. Employers, usually the womenfolk, would come down to interview applicants. Did the girl like children? Could she cook? Frequently the ever-ready assistant would be dispatched for a fortunate girl’s suitcase left with her landlady. Sometimes the latter would refuse to give up the suitcase and would herself come down to the store. The girl owed her money. Who would pay her? Oh, the girl had a job! Well, the valise would go, but not before the address of the girl’s situation is written out “black on white.” Meanwhile the girl would be glancing apologetically at the face of her prospective employer and pluck at her hands in fear.

Then, the employer, the servant and the assistant with the suitcase would be off together in an uneven line.

We had to wait and wait because no one wanted a servant with a child.

Finally our turn came.

We went to the house of a man who wore his tightly curled hair parted in the middle. When he smiled, he kept his pink lips shut and wrinkles chased themselves across his face like the ripples on water. His wife was in the hospital and mother was to be the servant, until she returned and was well enough to take care of the house and the three children.

I don’t remember seeing any children, but I do remember the peculiar arresting odor of leather in the house. Of the day, we spent there, I know nothing. At night, I remember my mother complained of the weariness that she felt after scrubbing those five

rooms and feeding the children. But we were glad to have found a temporary haven. Then she and I went to sleep.

Perhaps, two hours later, I was awakened by the voice of my mother, shrill and sharp with indignation. By the side of the bed, stood her employer . . .

We finished the rest of the night in the bed of Channeh Rosenthal, after my mother had wept her story and received the pitying cluckings of Channeh.

Again, we went to the Employment office and waited for work.

By this time, it was summer and my mother went to work in the house of a middle aged, sharp-eyed couple in Canarsie at \$16 a month. These people kept a counter and restaurant, serving sea food, frankfurters, pop corn, etc. They had three sons, two of whom helped in the business and a third, who was in the throes of a disease that makes people grow too much (I don't know what it is called) did nothing but sit on the beach and throw sand into the water after he had carefully molded it into a ball. There was an adopted daughter besides, a tall soft breasted girl of seventeen who had hair, the color of prune soup. She giggled when the diners talked to her and parted the wave in her pompadour with a pink, long-fingered hand.

I wandered about at my own will becoming a familiar and welcome figure in the beer gardens that at that time were as much a part of Canarsie as the salty air. In these beer gardens, one could order a mug and see a vaudeville show on the strength of one order. I would run errands for some of the actors and actresses and be paid liberally. I would imitate them and they would throw back their heads and laugh and I was happy. Very happy. I liked to make people laugh.

It was close to the end of the summer when something happened to hasten our departure. Mother and I shared the bed with Celia, the adopted daughter of our employers. Throughout our stay, there had always been bed bugs, but on that night, they seemed to have called a mass meeting, as Celia observed with her giggle.

I fell asleep while my mother mounted watch over me. It was in one of those half veiled snatches of sleep, that I felt the need of my



The Lower East Side neighborhood where Bella Cohen Spewack grew up and which she describes in her autobiography; photograph by J. Morrow (Community Service Society Papers)

mother's protecting hand on my uncovered feet. I opened my eyes and saw Celia sitting up against the wall, her arms crossed over her bosom, her hair falling about her like a moon mist. She wore no nightgown but a short, thin petticoat and her shirt. My mother was

moving about on the floor feeling her way to the matches. I could see everything by the white light that came from the night sky.

"I can't find them," my mother cried. "Where are the matches? I can't find the matches."

"You want the matches?"

My body stiffened. That was a new voice . . . a man's voice.

"She wants the matches!" said a second new voice . . . a man's voice. It was mocking and ugly.

"Let 'er look," added a third new voice. It belonged to the boy who was growing to death.

And suddenly through the dark room, sped lighted matches deftly flipped from the corners of the room. I screamed as one touched me. Celia was crying and laughing wildly, while my mother shrieked and shouted.

"If I only had a knife, I would stick it into you, murderers! God should punish you for what you are doing to a poor orphan." The orphan was Celia.

I do not remember how the night ended and I will not ask my mother. She would probably lie about it and perhaps try to laugh not to reassure me, but herself.

Three days later, we left. Celia wept when my mother left but shook her head when mother asked her to go away with us.

"Where could I go? This is the only home I know. Oh, don't worry about me. I don't belong to anyone. No one cares what happens to me."

Then she began to giggle and patted the wave in her pompadour.

After working as a domestic in several homes, Bella's mother found work as an operator in a ladies' shirt waist shop at \$7.50 a week, and Bella was brought to the Brightside Day Nursery.

The first day, I was introduced there, Miss Rachel, the matron, a broad-hipped, small faced woman patted my head and assured my mother that her baby would be well taken care of.

"*Haben sie kein Furcht*," she said in soft, guttural German.

My mother bent reverently at that and kissed her plump hand.

There were many other children like me, whose mothers worked during the day. Them, their husbands had deserted. Others were widows with memories of love words and death beds.

The nursery building, of gray stone, imperturbably restful, clean and calm eyed, stands out on Cannon Street to this day, a thing apart from its neighbors.

We children were herded into the basement by our parents, who left us there. It was gloomy but much warmer than the rooms all of us had just left. Our mothers and some fathers would risk being late and docked for a few moments to breathe in that luxuriant warmth that came from the walls.

Mothers who had infants would go upstairs to the nursery with their sleeping babes in their arms. I can imagine how they felt when the children slipping from their caressing grasp uttered low cries, opened startled eyes and reassured fell back into their clean cribs into sleep again. Sometimes, the babies cried long, unrelenting wails and mothers would steal through our midst in the basement, their hands to their eyes.

Then Miss Fannie came down. She had long red cheeks, and black, laughing eyes with chimney black, frowsy hair that stood out about her head. Her striped blue dress with its white apron was to me the embodiment of all splendor. I later mentally fitted all my princesses with Miss Fannie's uniform.

Upstairs we went to don our checked pinafores that covered us from chin to knee, and some to shoe tops. Then we sang "Father, We Thank Thee."

The room here was large and yellow floored with a stained window in the rear corner through which the sun never shone. Gay paper chains decorated the walls. There was also a piano, a mysterious thing that cried and laughed when Miss Fannie touched it. (I had surely seen a piano in Canarsie but it had made no impression, probably out-classed by the brass instruments and the drum.) Behind this room, across a hiccough of a hall, was the dining room where long low tables and green painted "baby" chairs were lined.

Here at noon, we seated ourselves folded our hands over the table and bent our heads over our hands. Under the prompting guidance of Miss Fannie or Miss Rachel, we thanked God for many things, none of which I remember, at least not indelibly. We always had hot watery cocoa, prunes and rice served in gray, tin dishes.

I don't know how many children and babies the Brightside Day Nursery held, but they were many—too many for me to remember. So that today, I have only the memory of a pallid, gray eyed little girl of my own age and a red headed boy of six who would get under the table and pinch our legs. The girl always screamed, but would never tell the reason to Miss Fannie. When the boy pinched my legs, I kicked him.

At night, from six to seven we would file down to the basement where our clothing hung and try to play. Each time the door opened we would lift our eyes, leaping with fondness. Then, as it turned out not to be our particular mother or father, we would turn back to our sitting games and wait for the next gust of wind.

Most of the younger ones' mothers would try to drop a curtsy. My mother always tried to kiss the hand of Miss Rachel or Miss Fannie. The older ones, a little harder than the rest would take their children by the hand and throw their snapped good nights over their shoulders.

When it snowed, I would always slide my way home, while my mother would run after me, crying:

“Anna, Anna, you’ll fall down and break a leg!”



A mother and six children in a tenement kitchen
(Community Service Society Papers)

After the first week in Mrs. Pincus’s basement my mother arranged to have Mrs. Pincus wake me and give me hot milk, while mother hurried off to the shop.

From the first day that this duty fell upon her, the old lady took a particular delight in pulling my ears to make me open my eyes. But I clung to sleep and closed my eyes again. With a stifled indignant cry that set her bow on the wig all atremble, she pulled the covers from me and dragged me to the floor, kneading her fingers into my arms and back. By this time I was awake and aching.

Her daughter Clara was asleep in the next room. I could hear her rasping snores as I dressed with chilled fingers. At that moment, I envied stupid Clara, lying with her hand over her nose and her eyelids partially drawn over her eyes. At the end of the second week, Mrs. Pincus began taking my ribbons from me with the order that I keep my mouth shut.

I did not tell my mother. She had her own troubles. Her mother was imploring her in bi-monthly letters to send more money. A younger sister was to be married. The dowry had to be provided. Besides, I was afraid that we would have to move back to those Peckacha children.

Mrs. Pincus's blows were preferable to their slimy mouths, I felt instinctively.

So I watched my ribbons disappear into the secretive looking bundles that Mrs. Pincus stored under her bed until one night I could stand it no longer. There was a bruise on my back that burned me as if I had been branded by a red hot iron.

My mother turned me over anxiously and began to cry. She cried easily.

"Honey! you are black and blue and your skin is peeled from your bones!" she exclaimed. Just then Mrs. Pincus entered from the rear room. My mother pointed to my uncovered back while her tears fell hot upon it.

"Look—Mrs. Pincus. Look! Would you believe that a kindergarten could do such things," she cried out. I had not said the kindergarten had inflicted those marks on my body, but my mother had already decided that for herself. Who else, but the kindergarten? It was the kindergarten. Burned it should be!

My mother rubbed some salve on my back and turned me over, crooning and moaning. Then she went to sleep. I tried to whisper to her and nudged her but she was exhausted from work and the unexpected sight of my blemished back. I lay awake all night so that I should not miss my mother in the morning, but I fell asleep. When I awoke my mother had already left.

Mrs. Pincus did not attempt to hasten my dressing in the usual way although she did not omit the usual tweaking of my ears. She even permitted me to wear the new ribbon my mother had brought me the night before. I drew back suspiciously from an attempted pat. Mrs. Pincus might have changed her mind before her hand rested on my hair.

All day I was unusually silent in the kindergarten. Since I was excused from any of the games that required much exercise, because of my back, I had plenty of time to brood on my decision to tell my mother the truth. When she came that night, she sullenly refused to return the “good evening” that Miss Fannie extended her. Her lips began to tremble. I was afraid she would cry and I did not want Miss Fannie to see my mother cry! So on the pretense of having her help me locate my coat and tam o’ shanter, I took her to the wardrobe closet and told her the truth.

She was so stunned that for a moment, she could do nothing but stare at me.

“You tell the truth?” she said.

“She’s got the ribbons too,” I added.

This was too much. My mother rushed from me with the tale of my tortures to Miss Fannie and Miss Rachel.

“Now, if you can’t trust a religious woman who wears a wig, whom can you trust?” she tearfully demanded.

One of the mothers who had crowded about her, told her of a Mrs. Forman who lived in a rear house opposite who would be glad to have us board with her.

My mother immediately went across with the woman to meet Mrs. Forman, who proved to be a little woman of fifty with curling black bangs over her forehead. She had a long nose and thin little pale lips that she sucked continually. She put her arms around me and asked my mother where she had gotten such a pretty daughter.

My mother left me in her care and went to get our belongings from the basement of Mrs. Pincus. In about a half hour she returned, her cheeks streaked with tears and her eyes blazing with

stored up wrath. Two small boys followed her with our featherbed and valises. As she paid them, she burst out into wild curses, invoking all the black years with their pestilences to fall upon the head of the pious, watery-eyed Mrs. Pincus.

Mrs. Forman transferred her pats to my mother's head. With every murmured word of sympathy, she screwed up her funny little grey eyes until they seemed to be just mere scintillating pin points of light. Why dwell on unhappy things that are past? Better to forget . . . God had already punished Mrs. Pincus. Did my mother know that Mrs. Pincus had had an older daughter, who had run away from her to Philadelphia? Yes with a man. And her mother had never heard from her since.

"Beauty is like a curse," she said in her little voice. It came as if she were pressing her lips against a knot-hole in a fence. "If her daughter had not been so beautiful, she would still be at the side of her mother. Now, my daughter no one will ever take from me. She is so ugly."

And Mrs. Forman was truthfully open-eyed. Yetta, her daughter, was a red haired, long nosed, slanty eyed girl with round shoulders and a pitiful desire to be in style. Her eyelashes and brows were the color of her freckles of which she had a large ill proportioned number. She later married—or rather was married to a widower with three children, who wiped his nose on his sleeve.

Generations of Service to the Tsars

The Benckendorffs

NATHANIEL KNIGHT

After seventy years gathering dust in an English attic, the papers of Russia's illustrious Benckendorff family have made their way to Columbia's Bakhmeteff archive. With the long process of cataloging near completion, this large collection will soon be open to the public—an event eagerly awaited by scholars of Russian history and diplomacy throughout the world.

The papers belonged to Alexander Constantinovich Benckendorff, the last tsarist ambassador to the Court of St. James's; all of his personal and professional correspondence located in the embassy at the time of his death is included. And by fortunate happenstance, Benckendorff also had with him the archive of his father, Constantin Constantinovich Benckendorff, a soldier and diplomat who died in 1858. Thus the collection as a whole covers a broad timespan from the 1790s to the 1920s, allowing the historian to observe how the ideal of service to the tsars was expressed over the course of five generations.

Although the Benckendorffs devoted their lives to serving the Russian state, they, as their name suggests, were not Russian. The family was part of the Baltic German nobility, descendants of the teutonic knights who swept into the area in the Middle Ages only to be halted by Alexander Nevsky and his stalwart Novgorodians on the ice of Lake Chud. By the time Peter the Great took over Latvia and Lithuania from the Swedes in the aftermath of the Great Northern War, a Benckendorff was ensconced as mayor of Riga. The family quickly reached an understanding with the new rulers of the Baltic, thus beginning a tradition of service that would continue undiminished straight up to 1917.

The Benckendorffs' Germanic roots were a critical factor in determining their identity. Despite their prominent position, they never fully assimilated the Russian culture. Apart from the last generation before the revolution, the Benckendorffs preferred not to

use Russian as their primary language. Russian was used occasionally for matters related to service, but personal relations were carried on solely in French or German. The Benckendorffs' lack of a cultural identification with Russia was offset by the ease with which



Count Alexander Constantinovich Benckendorff, last
Russian ambassador to the Court of St. James's,
ca. 1915

they were integrated into aristocratic circles throughout Europe—particularly after a series of well-planned marriages connected the Benckendorffs with some of the oldest and most prestigious families on the continent. Given their connections, diplomacy was the natural career of choice. The Benckendorffs held a variety of posts

throughout the eighteenth century, but their real break came about toward the end of the century when Christoph Benckendorff married Julianna Schilling, the personal companion and childhood friend of the Tsarina Maria Fedorovna, a German princess married to the future Tsar Paul I. Maria Fedorovna took an active interest in the children of her close friend and endeavored to advance their careers in any way possible.

Of the three Benckendorff children, the most colorful was Dorothea, better known by her married name of Princess Lieven. At the age of sixteen she had been awarded the prestigious post of lady-in-waiting to Maria Fedorovna. Soon after, she was married to Prince Christoph Lieven, the offspring of yet another prominent Baltic noble family. Although his background was in the military, Prince Lieven decided to try his hand at diplomacy and in 1809 was appointed ambassador to Berlin. Three years later he was transferred to London, where he served for the next twenty-two years. Prince Lieven turned out to be a mediocre diplomat at best, but his term as ambassador was considered a great success, largely due to the talent and energy of his wife. With her beauty, charm, and formidable intelligence, Princess Lieven was able to navigate the treacherous waters of regency court politics, winning the friendship and trust of individuals from the most disparate of factions. Among her foremost achievements was her intimate friendship with Prince Metternich of Austria during the period when he was at the height of his power. Other friends included the Duke of Wellington, Viscount Castlereagh, Earl Grey, and Talleyrand.

In 1834, Prince Lieven was recalled to Russia and took a reluctant Dorothea with him. But after a miserable year in which her two youngest sons died of scarlet fever, she obtained permission to return to Western Europe alone, ostensibly for health reasons. Settling in Paris, she soon reestablished many of her old connections and started a lively salon. When her husband wrote from Italy in 1837 requesting that she join him, she refused on the grounds that her health would not permit her to make the journey. The tsar, who hated everything to do with France and had ordered Prince Lieven

to bring his wayward wife back to Russia, was angered by Dorothea's obstinacy. Therefore he forbade the prince from having any further contact with his wife, and the two never met again—Prince Lieven died soon after. Firmly ensconced in Paris with all ties to Russia broken, Princess Lieven became the companion and lover of the prominent French politician and historian François Guizot. Ever the aristocrat, the princess reportedly turned down her lover's marriage proposal on the grounds that she could not bear to be known as "Madame Guizot." The idyllic splendor of her Parisian life was interrupted only once, in 1848, when she and Guizot were forced to flee the revolution in Paris and seek refuge in England. They were able to return to Paris in 1850, and Princess Lieven died a few years later with Guizot at her side.

Princess Lieven's brother, Count Alexander Khristoforovich Benckendorff, was perhaps the most renowned member of the family. He began his career as a cavalry officer and served with distinction during the Napoleonic wars. But Alexander Khristoforovich discovered his true calling soon after the ascension of the Emperor Nicholas I to the throne, thanks to a memorandum he had written a few years earlier to the previous tsar, Alexander I, warning of the existence of dangerous secret societies among the younger generation of officers. His memorandum was ignored at the time, but Benckendorff was vindicated in December 1825 when a group of officers from some of the most prestigious regiments refused to recognize the new tsar and organized an unsuccessful revolt against Nicholas calling for liberty, justice, and a constitution. Benckendorff made certain that his earlier memorandum was brought to the attention of Nicholas, who was quick to recognize in Alexander Khristoforovich a dedicated and loyal supporter. So impressed was Nicholas with Benckendorff's abilities that he entrusted him with the task of organizing a police force to wipe out all traces of subversion in Russia. Benckendorff's gendarmes—known as the Third Section of His Majesty's Chancery—came to epitomize the reactionary spirit of the Nicholaevan era, and Benckendorff himself gained notoriety as the personal censor of Russia's greatest poet,

Alexander Pushkin. But the letters contained in the Columbia collection show a different side to Alexander Khristoforovich's personality. Writing to his nephew, Benckendorff comes across as a kind and concerned family man who took pains to insure that his young relative received a start in life commensurate with his proud heritage. When Alexander Khristoforovich died in 1844, he was deeply mourned by his family and eulogized as a force for harmony and reconciliation.

Benckendorff's nephew, Count Constantin Constantinovich, the central figure in the first part of the collection, was orphaned early in life and adopted by his uncle, from whom he inherited the title of Count. He was educated at the elite Corps of Pages and, thanks to his uncle's influence, launched what promised to be a brilliant military and diplomatic career. He began as aide-de-camp to the Minister of War and later to the emperor himself, and he served on three different military campaigns in the Caucasus. In 1845, his recognizance party was set upon by a band of tribesmen. In the battle that ensued, Constantin was severely wounded. For weeks he hovered on the brink of death, and even after his survival was ensured, he never fully recovered: almost certainly the nervous disorder that afflicted him ten years later and caused his death was a product of his war wounds.

When he had recovered enough to resume service, Constantin accepted a post as military attaché at the Russian embassy in Berlin. It was here that he met and fell in love with Louise von Croy-Dulmen, a beautiful young princess from an ancient line of German nobles. The romance of Constantin and Louise took place against the backdrop of the revolution of 1848. In March of that year, radical crowds took control of Berlin and forced the erratic and ineffectual king, Frederick William IV, to promise political reforms. To avoid the unrest, Louise and her family fled the capital, while Constantin stayed at the embassy feverishly writing intelligence reports to be read by the tsar. When the situation calmed down, Constantin and Louise were reunited and soon married. Eventually Constantin's career brought the couple to Stuttgart, where he served first as

envoy and then as ambassador to the court at Württemberg. The voluminous correspondence between husband and wife from this period provides a detailed record of the tumultuous events going on around them as well as an intimate portrayal of personal relations within the aristocracy. During their years in Stuttgart and Berlin, the couple had four children: Alexander (1849), Paul (1853), Nathalie (1854), and Olga (1857). But in January 1858, their happy existence was shattered by the death of Constantin as a result of a mysterious nervous disorder, the progress of which is graphically illustrated by the deterioration of his handwriting in the months before his death.

Following Constantin's death, Louise moved the family to Paris and enrolled the children in French schools. From then on, Louise had as little as possible to do with Russia, although she continued to receive a substantial income from the family's hereditary estate in Tambov province. She eventually settled in Austria, where she lived until her death in 1890. Louise's daughters did not maintain much connection with their Russian roots, but Alexander and Paul Benckendorff had family tradition to uphold. On reaching adolescence, the boys, who barely spoke a word of Russian, were sent to study at their father's alma mater in St. Petersburg under the watchful eye of the family financial advisor, Alexander Abramovich Peretz.

Both boys showed considerable talent and on graduation from the Corps of Pages began their rise to prominent positions within the Russian government. Paul was drawn toward service in the court, and by the turn of the century he had risen to the post of chief marshal of protocol—a position that brought him into daily contact with the royal family. His letters to his brother, in which he reports events in St. Petersburg with devastating frankness, provide a vivid portrait of the last years of the Romanovs in all their grandeur and disarray. After the February revolution of 1917, Paul remained with the deposed tsar and his family until they were sent off to Siberia and their eventual murder at the hands of the Bolsheviks. Stranded by revolution and civil war in Petrograd, Paul and his

wife, Mary, were stripped of all their wealth and suffered enormous deprivation. In 1921 they attempted to escape to Estonia, but the strains of the journey were too much for the elderly man. While awaiting processing at the Estonian border, Paul came down with a



Alexander Constantinovich and Sophie Petrovna Benckendorff
in the Russian embassy, London, ca. 1915

severe flu and died shortly thereafter. His reminiscences of life with the deposed tsar were published in the mid-twenties at the behest of his widow and relatives.

Alexander Constantinovich Benckendorff followed in the footsteps of his father and great-uncle by building a career within the diplomatic corps. With his impeccable knowledge of European lan-

guages, his innate sense of tact and extensive aristocratic connections, he was eminently qualified for his chosen profession. After serving for two decades in Austria and Denmark, Benckendorff was appointed ambassador to Great Britain in 1903. At the time, relations between Britain and Russia were anything but cordial. The situation was particularly exacerbated by the Russo-Japanese War and by a series of clashes between British ships and a Russian fleet en route to the Far East. Benckendorff succeeded in smoothing out these differences and was one of the primary architects of the Anglo-Russian alliance in the years leading up to World War I. His papers contain a wealth of materials related to pre-war diplomacy.

Benckendorff's personal correspondence is no less interesting. While on duty in London, Benckendorff depended heavily on his wife, Sophie, who never missed the winter "season" in St. Petersburg, to keep him informed about events back home. Sophie, a woman of indomitable energy and willpower, performed her duties admirably, writing thousands of letters filled with the latest news and gossip. Among other things, she describes "Bloody Sunday" (the shooting of protesting workers in front of the Winter Palace by tsarist troops in January 1905), the opening of the Russian Duma, or legislature, and the impact of the peasant disorders of 1905. For several years she kept a running tally of summary executions in the countryside by punitive detachments. During World War I, Sophie and her daughter Natalie organized a committee to aid Russian prisoners of war and in the process assembled a unique collection of eyewitness accounts describing conditions in German camps. In addition to her philanthropic activities, Sophie Benckendorff was a patron of the arts and corresponded with such eminent writers as Maurice Baring, Paul Valéry, and H. G. Wells. After the death of her husband in 1917, Sophie remained in London and was soon faced with an onslaught of relatives and acquaintances fleeing the turmoil in Russia. Unlike most émigrés, Sophie was financially secure; her family, the Shuvalovs, was one of the richest in all of Russia, and she and her husband had invested heavily in foreign

securities. This put her in a position to assist her less fortunate relatives, and so naturally she received a great deal of mail full of tales of hardship and dislocation vividly depicting the émigrés' plight.

Some of the most dramatic material in the collection concerns Alexander Benckendorff's son Constantin. Cony—as he was known to family and friends—broke new ground within the Benckendorff family by choosing to serve in the Russian Navy. This brought him into the thick of conflict during the Russo-Japanese War. A participant in the ill-fated defense of Port Arthur, he was eventually captured by the Japanese and spent a year living a remarkably carefree life as a prisoner of war boarded with a Japanese family and treated with the utmost respect.

Returning to Russia a year later, Cony settled on the family estate, Sosnovka, in Tambov province and took up life as a country gentleman. But with the onset of World War I, Cony returned to the Navy and eventually settled into a position as a supply officer in the northern city of Arkhangel'sk, spending the war years there in a daze of frenetic activity interrupted only by the deaths of his brother, Pierre, in 1915 and his father in 1917. Cony left Arkhangel'sk soon after his father's death, and after a few aimless months in St. Petersburg he accepted a position as liaison to the foreign military attachés at general staff headquarters near the front line. But fighting with Germany was at a lull, and although he was shocked and bewildered by the Bolshevik revolution, most of his time was spent, as he put it, "vegetating in a small house" with a few friends.

After the treaty of Brest-Litovsk and the official disbanding of the Russian army, Cony returned to Tambov with the intention of living a peaceful life on his estate, but when Bolshevik agitators arrived at the village denouncing the "bloodsucking slaveowners," the peasants were forced to expel him. Eventually he made his way to Moscow, where he was mobilized by the Bolsheviks to participate in diplomatic negotiations and advise in the rebuilding of the Navy. At the end of the Civil War, he elected to stay in Russia and continue his service in the Navy on the rationale that his loyalty to Russia

outweighed his distaste for the Bolsheviks—a common attitude at the time. Unfortunately, circumstances would not allow Cony to continue his Naval career. On two or three occasions he was arrested by the secret police on suspicion of spying, and by 1922 he



Constantin Alexandrovich ("Cony") and Pierre Alexandrovich Benckendorff
at the family estate, Sosnovka, ca. 1900

had come to know Moscow's Butyrsky prison all too well. In the end his superiors at the Naval Ministry decided it was simply too politically risky to keep him on.

Unemployed and at risk of being arrested yet again, he was saved by his lifelong love for music. Cony was an enthusiastic amateur flutist, and when he lost his job with the Navy, friends arranged to have him join a symphony orchestra, thus providing him with a modicum of security. Here he fell in love with Maria Korchinskaia, an accomplished harpist. They were married in 1923, and their first

child, a daughter, was born soon after. What had been tolerable for a single man became increasingly hard to cope with as a family, and the couple began to plan their escape from Russia. In a sense, they were among the first Soviet defectors: a concert tour through Europe featuring a program of flute and harp duets provided the pretext for the couple to reach England, where they were joyfully greeted by their relatives.

The materials described above are only part of the collection. There are literally thousands of documents from a broad range of correspondents providing almost endless possibilities for research. Topics range from the first Russian diplomatic expedition to China in 1806, to the administration of Finland at the turn of the century, to French aristocratic refugees in the 1790s and Russian refugees in the 1920s. But viewed as a whole, it is the collection's continuity and comprehensiveness that makes it unique. From the mass of correspondence, both private and official, a nuanced picture emerges of a distinct and influential milieu that bridged the gap between Russia and the West. Inextricably linked through culture, language, and kinship to the European aristocracy, the Benckendorffs were bound to Russia by family tradition and a value system that stressed honor, loyalty, and service above all else. Over the course of a century the family evolved, with each generation reflecting the changing historical and cultural environment, but the fundamental core of values at the heart of the Benckendorffs' way of life remained intact.

“For My Own Pleasure”

Frank Altschul’s Overbrook Press

W. GREGORY GALLAGHER

Overbrook Press was founded in 1934 by Frank Altschul, a prominent Wall Street investment banker, whose interest in printing began when he was a child. One Christmas his mother gave him a toy press, but ink was soon all over the house and the press was returned to the store. He retained his interest in printing and soon after his marriage set up a small press in his New York apartment. But it was not long before it, too, had to be relinquished when the space it occupied was needed for his growing family. Years later, Altschul discovered an explanation for his avocation: no less than ten of his Bohemian ancestors had been printers.

Thus, in 1934, when Margaret B. Evans, who had previously been associated with August Heckscher’s Ashlar Press, approached Altschul with the idea of starting a private press, he responded enthusiastically. A former pigpen on his country estate, Overbrook Farm, in Stamford, Connecticut, was converted to a print shop, and a secondhand Colts Armory press was purchased along with a variety of type and a treasury of papers, many dating from before the First World War.

Evans became both designer and compositor for the new press until she was succeeded in 1944 by John Logan, who stayed on until his death in 1967. When Evans came to Overbrook, she brought with her master pressman John MacNamara, who remained with the press until his death in 1955, after which the pressman’s job was filled by Frederick Warns. The Overbrook staff were skilled and devoted employees who ran the press and did most of the design work, except for special projects when noted artists were hired. Altschul decided what to print and to whom to distribute the printed works. Overbrook imprints were seldom sold; most were given to family members and to friends and acquaintances, both business and social. Some works were sent to his clubs and to schools and libraries with which he was associated.

Overbrook Press was a vehicle for Altschul's interest in the art of printing, and it also served other aspects of his life: his family, his support of his college and clubs, and his interest in chess, politics, and literature. Greeting cards, bookplates, invitations, dinner pro-



Frank Altschul, founder and proprietor of
Overbrook Press (Blackstone Studios)

grams, and memorial booklets for family and friends issued regularly from the press. When Altschul's sister Edith was the subject of the society page, the article was reprinted by the press. Edith was married to New York State Governor Herbert H. Lehman, and Altschul's brother-in-law was the author or subject of nearly a dozen Overbrook titles. Other members of these families became

subjects for pieces, including Charles and Julius Altschul; Judge Irving Lehman and Peter Lehman; and Philip J., Phyllis W., and Howard Lehman Goodhart.

Altschul used the press to support his alma mater, Yale. He founded the Yale Library Associates, for whom he printed *Addresses Commemorating the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of William Morris* (1935), which was co-authored by Altschul's friend and former mentor, Chauncey B. Tinker, and Carl P. Rollins, Printer to the University. In addition to his usual team of Evans and MacNamara, Altschul hired Anna Simons to design woodcut initials and Valenti Angelo to draw the border for the book. The press produced two additional pieces for the Library Associates, and a number of essays, speeches, and reports for other Yale bodies on which Altschul served. For Yale's Pierson College, of which he was an associate fellow, he published a war memorial book, *Pierson College: In Memorium, 1941-1946* (1947), and the two-volume history of the college, *Pierson College: The First Decade, 1933-1943* (1944), which was illustrated by Thomas M. Cleland.

Altschul was a member of the distinguished Marshall Chess Club in the 1920s and 1930s. In a letter to fellow chess enthusiast and Yale scholar W. K. Wimsatt, he recalls, "my own interest in chess problems dates from schooldays when I used to play occasionally in interscholastic tournaments, and I from time to time composed modest two-movers." Altschul felt that books on chess were "abominably printed," and in the early 1940s he published a series of eight chess books of superior typography, one of which, *A Sketchbook of American Chess Problematists*, was selected in 1942 by the American Institute of Graphic Arts as one of the Fifty Books of the Year.

Overbrook Press also published humorous pieces. *One Hundred Per Cent American* (1939), an essay by Quentin Reynolds, had a printer's device by Valenti Angelo depicting three pigs looking over a fence. It was the only press publication to bear the literally true imprint "Pig Pen Press," in wry allusion to the earlier use of the building the press now occupied. Another humorous piece, *Three*

Sketches by Mark Twain, was, according to its colophon, “printed for our Senators and Congressmen, who, in these troubled times [1946], may find much needed distraction in the refreshing humor of Mark Twain.” The tongue-in-cheek *In Praise of Polygamy* (1957) by Francis T. P. Plimpton was so popular that the first printing of one thousand copies soon ran out and numerous reprintings were required.



Overbrook Farm, 1929, five years before the founding of the press

During the war, Altschul, a devout anglophile, printed speeches and broadsides emphasizing the historical and cultural connection between Great Britain and the United States. Later, in 1953, as a member of the English-Speaking Union, he was asked to print a book of names of subscribers to a scholarship fund honoring the late King George VI (*Donors to the King George VI Memorial Fund*), a coronation gift for Elizabeth II. For his efforts, Altschul had the honor of presenting the book to the queen.

One of the more unusual emphases of Overbrook Press was the printing of political tracts. They account for well over a third of Overbrook titles, but even more interesting is the unexpected care given to this kind of rhetoric, equal to the same high standards

applied to other areas of Overbrook publication. A powerful and respected man in the financial community, Altschul felt he had a part to play in national and international affairs, influenced by the example of his brother-in-law, Herbert H. Lehman, with whom he had a close relationship.

World War II and the cold war that followed provided Altschul with many opportunities to print scores of essays, speeches, and articles and to distribute them to state and federal lawmakers, to the judiciary (Altschul was on a first name basis with more than one justice of the Supreme Court), and to important persons in finance, education, publishing, and journalism—in short, to policymakers and to those who could influence them.

The attractive packaging of these tracts encouraged recipients to give more consideration to the opinions they expressed than they otherwise might have. No doubt Altschul's political connections made it imprudent to ignore his mailings, but recipients were also flattered by his attention. And the authors, too, were happy that their pieces received such fine printing. On occasion Altschul would make editorial changes to the piece being reprinted; Dean Acheson was one author who received such treatment, and he seems to have genuinely appreciated it.

To say that the list of authors of the political pieces that Altschul reprinted reads like a *Who's Who* of the period would be to understate the case; their names were and still are household words. A partial list includes: Winston S. Churchill, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Felix Frankfurter, John Kenneth Galbraith, John F. Kennedy, Walter Lippmann, Douglas MacArthur, Reinhold Niebuhr, Dean Rusk, John Steinbeck, Adlai Stevenson, Dorothy Thompson, Earl Warren, and Woodrow Wilson.

It was in belles-lettres, however, that Overbrook achieved its distinction as a fine press, publishing thirty-five works of literature. The early years of the press were its most productive. As the first major work of the press, Altschul wanted to publish a collection of Edna St. Vincent Millay's poetry. (Its first publication was a type specimen book.) He wrote to Millay for permission, citing as quali-

Specimen of types	
22	193 k v w h 275
36	CLEAR
	reason
30	rules design
	
16	RESTRAI
	NT MAY GIVE
	<i>more than expression</i>

Page from the first publication of Overbrook Press,
The Types, Borders, Rules & Devices of the Press
Arranged as a Keepsake, 1934

fications for such a project his presidency of the American Institute of Graphic Arts and his chairmanship of the publications committee of the Grolier Club. As compensation, Millay was to receive an unspecified number of copies of the edition. On the advice of her editor, however, she rejected the proposal. Altschul then turned to his old favorite, George Meredith. Earlier he had printed a few of

the sixteen-line sonnets from *Modern Love* on the press he once had in his New York apartment. Now, in 1942, he printed the complete sequence in Caslon Old Face type on handmade paper, bound in black cloth with gold letters.

Many noted book designers and illustrators contributed to the success of these works of belles-lettres. Valenti Angelo provided the title page vignette for the next major effort of the press, *The Lady's New-Year's-Gift or: Advice to a Daughter* (1934) by George Savile, lord marquess of Halifax. Angelo also provided decorative pieces for six other Overbrook imprints. W. A. Dwiggins did the typography and illustration of *One More Spring* (1935) by Robert Nathan, the first of nine Overbrook titles that were selected by the American Institute of Graphic Arts for Fifty Books of the Year awards.

For Overbrook's edition of *Inland Voyage* (1938) by Robert Louis Stevenson, French artist Jean Hugo (grandson of the novelist) was commissioned to retrace Stevenson's voyage through the canals of the Low Countries. The sketches he made on this journey were used as the twenty-three colored chapter headings of the book, another Fifty Books of the Year winner. The following year, Bruce Rogers designed the initials for Overbrook's folio-size *Poems of Shakespeare*.

Another noted book designer and illustrator, Rudolph Ruzicka, did wood engravings and decorations for five Overbrook titles. In his design for Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1936), he used blue paper boards with green decorations and a colophon device in the same colors. The combination was a favorite with Ruzicka, and he used it again for the Chinese print-like decorations he made for *Addresses Delivered Before the House of Representatives and the Senate of the United States* (1943) by Madame Chaing Kai-Shek.

The artist most closely associated with Overbrook Press was Thomas Maitland Cleland. An old friend of Altschul's, in 1935 he did the typography for the edition of Richard Aldington's *A Dream in the Luxembourg*, and the following year he did the title page illustration and a heraldic device for Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental*

Journey. Over the next twenty years, Cleland illustrated several more pieces for Overbrook, including *Pierson College: The First Decade, 1933-1943* (1944); a pamphlet on the BBC by John Crosby; Altschul's 1951 Christmas card, for which he made two drawings of Overbrook Farm; and the *King George VI Memorial Fund* book (1953). In addition, the press published two pieces on the graphic arts that Cleland wrote as well as illustrated: "*Progress*" in *the Graphic Arts* (1949) and *2 Letters in Praise of Progress in the Typographic and the Social Arts . . .* (1950).

Cleland's most important work for Overbrook is its masterpiece, L'Abbé Prévost's *Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut*. Altschul and Cleland decided that this edition would be a unique example of the art and craft of bookmaking. Work was started on the project in 1952, when Cleland was seventy-two years old. Cleland's illustrations appear on forty-two pages and "are not reproductions . . . as there were no colored originals from which they could be reproduced. . . ." Each illustration, in each copy of the book, Cleland claimed, was an original work of art: "each is an autographic print by an artist . . . the colors made and applied by his own hand." The process used was silk screen, an intricate and time-consuming procedure. Each of the colors was printed separately. At least six and often as many as ten different workings were required for each picture. Not only was the process entirely and solely conducted by Cleland, but he also formulated the colors and made all the equipment needed for production.

Cleland was a perfectionist and his work on *Manon Lescaut* was obsessive. It was projected to take from one-and-a-half to two years to complete, for which Cleland was to receive a thousand dollars a month from Altschul. It actually "consumed more than six years of unremitting labor, fourteen to sixteen hours per day, seven days per week." Cleland was given to exaggeration, but even a schedule half as arduous would have been taxing for a man of Cleland's age. Indeed, halfway along he suffered a mild stroke, which delayed the project for several months. It was finally finished in 1958. A handsome, large quarto, handset in Caslon Old Face type and printed (in

135

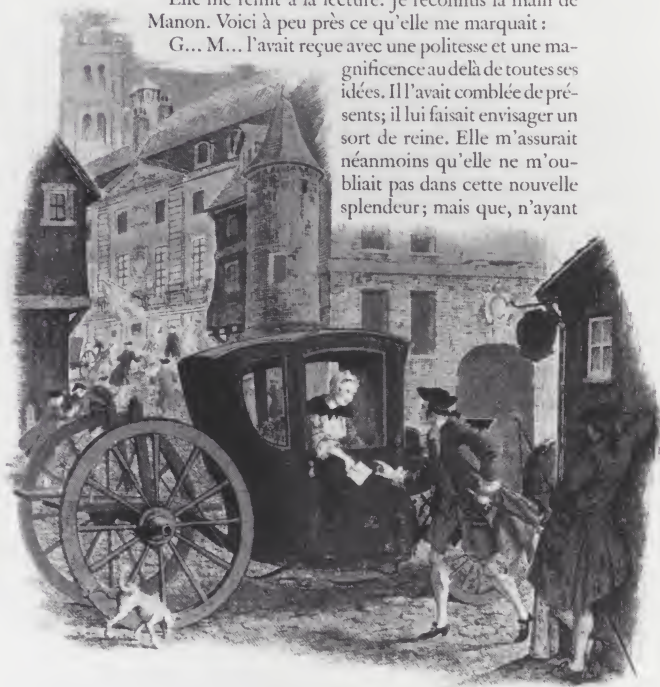
du sujet qui m'amène, et par quel rapport j'ai l'avantage de connaître votre nom.

Je la pria de me donner le temps de la lire dans un cabaret voisin. Elle voulut me suivre, et elle me conseilla de demander une chambre à part.

— De qui vient cette lettre? lui dis-je en montant.

Elle me remit à la lecture. Je reconnus la main de Manon. Voici à peu près ce qu'elle me marquait :

G... M... l'avait reçue avec une politesse et une magnificence au delà de toutes ses idées. Il l'avait comblée de présents; il lui faisait envisager un sort de reine. Elle m'assurait néanmoins qu'elle ne m'oubliait pas dans cette nouvelle splendeur; mais que, n'ayant



One of Thomas M. Cleland's illustrations for *Histoire du Chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut* by L'Abbé Prévost, 1958

French) on Hammar and Anvil paper, the volumes are bound in full brown morocco, stamped in gold on the spine and with marbled endpapers. Each is enclosed in a brown linen slipcase; two hundred copies were printed.

Manon Lescaut cost Altschul "what was left of half a million dollars of income after taxes." He was proud of his expensive masterpiece, and in addition to the usual select list of family, friends, clubs, and schools, he sent copies to major libraries, including New York Public Library, J. Pierpont Morgan Library, Library of Congress, British Museum, Bodleian Library, and Bibliothèque Nationale. A few copies were sold by Duschnes at \$250 each.

In 1967 Overbrook published its last major literary work, an edition of Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome*. Thereafter the activities of the press began to wind down. John Logan, the compositor, died that year, and Altschul felt his replacement lacked imagination. In addition, the pressman, Frederick Warns, wanted to retire. Altschul, approaching his eighty-third birthday, closed the press in 1969. It had been a long run for a private press, thirty-five years and 269 titles, and a good one in terms of the quality of its work. Altschul described Overbrook Press as "a private press which I ran for my own pleasure and for the pleasure and benefit of my friends." That purpose was well accomplished and has left a legacy of works of enduring quality and craftsmanship.

Our Growing Collections

RUDOLPH ELLENBOGEN

Barnouw gift. Professor Emeritus Erik Barnouw has donated for inclusion in his papers more than 250 items, primarily correspondence dating from the 1920s to 1989, relating to his career in the School of Dramatic Arts at Columbia and in radio, television, and film. Among the correspondents are Pearl Buck, Norman Corwin, Paddy Chayefsky, Frances Flaherty, Paul Horgan, Akira Iwasaki, S. Krishnaswamy, Pare Lorentz, Bernard Malamud, Satyajit Ray, Mrs. Paul Robeson, and Virgil Thomson, as well as many other writers and executives of the broadcast industry.

Beckson gift. Mr. Karl E. Beckson (A.M., 1952; Ph.D., 1959) has donated to the Libraries a collection of forty-seven books and pamphlets of English literature, dating from the 1890s to 1990. Among the books in his gift are: three inscribed by Arthur Symons, *Amoris Victima*, 1940, *London: A Book of Aspects*, 1909, and *Cities and Sea Coast Islands*; and two from the library of Martin Secker by Owen Seaman, *The Battle of the Bays*, 1896, and *In Cap & Bells*, 1900. Also included in the gift is John Guille Millais's biography of his father, *The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais*, 1905, inscribed by Ada Levenson to Ernest Levenson, and a volume of *The Pageant*, 1897, which has contributions by Austin Dobson, Laurence Housman, Max Beerbohm, Ernest Dowson, and Lionel Johnson, and art by Gustav Moreau, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones, Walter Crane, Charles Ricketts, and Lucien Pissarro.

Blau gift. Mr. Raphael David Blau (A.B., 1933; A.M., 1938 T.C.) has presented a copy of a poetry examination, "Exercises in Judging Poetry" by Allan Abbott and M. R. Trabue, that was completed by Richard L. Simon on May 9, 1920, while Simon was still a student at Columbia. Mr. Blau's gift is accompanied by his 1991 letter to *Columbia Magazine* telling the story of his discovery of the exam in 1939 and Simon's June 9, 1939, letter to Blau regarding his memory of the examination.

Boyer gift. Mrs. Marjorie Boyer (A.M., 1934; Ph.D., 1958) presented to the Libraries 3,861 books from her library and from the library of her late husband, Carl B. Boyer (A.B., 1928; A.M., 1929; Ph.D., 1939). The books relate primarily to the history of mathematics and to medieval history, art, and music. George Boole's *Treatise on Differential Equations*, Cambridge, 1865, Leonhard Euler's *Introductio in Analysin Infinitorum*, Lugduni, 1797, Johann Christoph Heilbronner's *Historia Matheseos Universae*, Lipsiae, 1742, and Thucydides's *Histoire de la Guerre des Peloponnesiens*, 1600, are among the ninety-five rare volumes donated. In addition, there is a volume of more than thirty pieces of American sheet music, the majority of which date from the first half of the nineteenth century. A special arrangement has been made for the sale to Columbia graduate students of all materials not selected for the Libraries.

Coover gift. A rare Latin-Chinese grammar, Etienne Fourmont's *Linguae Sinarum Mandarinicae Hieroglyphicae Grammatica Duplex, Latine, & cum Characteribus Sinesium*, Paris, 1742, has been presented by Mr. Christopher Coover (M.S. in L.S., 1983). In addition, Mr. Coover has donated two letters that provide insight into the seventeenth-century world of books and literary matters, the first from the philologist Nicolaus Heinsius to Theodore Rykius, The Hague, 8 December 1666, and the second from the philosopher and man-of-letters Pierre Bayle to Emery Bigot, Rotterdam, 30 May 1689. Mr. Coover's gift also contains Robert Louis Stevenson's copy with his bookplate of George Saintsbury's *Miscellaneous Essays*, London, 1892, inscribed by the author to Stevenson; T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, New York, 1943, one of the 788 copies of the suppressed first American edition; and William Robertson's *Phraseologia Generalis*, Cambridge, 1681, a collection of Latin phrases that continued to be reprinted as late as 1824.

Haverstick gift. Mrs. Iola Haverstick (A.B., 1946 B.; A.M., 1965) has donated twenty-two first editions by Louis Auchincloss, virtually all of which are inscribed or signed. In the earliest, *Sybil*, pub-

lished in 1952, Auchincloss has written, "For Iola & John who have followed Sybil from her earliest appearance as Maud." In 1962 the *Saturday Review* published Mrs. Haverstick's interview with Auchincloss, and he inscribed his *Portrait of a Brownstone*, 1962,



Verso of half-title page of *Linguae Sinarum
Mandarinicae Hieroglyphicae Grammatica Duplex*
(Coover gift)

"For Iola Haverstick My old friend and nicest interviewer, June 14, 1962." The gift also includes a letter from Auchincloss in which he comments on Saul Bellow's *Herzog* and discusses Henry James's method of composition.

Hazzard gift. Shirley Hazzard has established a collection of her papers with a gift of approximately two thousand manuscripts, documents, reports, interviews, notes, and other materials pertaining to her research on the United Nations and for her book *Countenance of Truth*, an examination of the United Nations and Kurt Waldheim.

Jaffin gift. Mr. George M. Jaffin (A.B., 1924; L.L., 1926) has presented two watercolor drawings by Rockwell Kent, "Adam," 1926, and an untitled drawing for the Sears, Roebuck and Company War Bond series, 1942. In addition, his gift includes Arthur Rackham Christmas cards inscribed by the artist; an autograph letter by Rackham to the American art dealer Alwin J. Scheuer (see *Columbia Library Columns*, November 1991); and a nineteenth-century Arabic manuscript of the Koran, decorated in gilt.

Kennedy gift. Ms. Sighle Kennedy (A.M., 1964; Ph.D., 1969) has presented Samuel Beckett's *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, Dublin, 1992, one of 130 numbered copies specially bound and in a cloth slipcase. This is the first publication of Beckett's first novel, written in Paris in 1932. The book has been designed in an Art Nouveau style appropriate to the period of the text.

Mayer gift. For addition to her father's papers, Meredith Nevins Mayer has presented eighty-one letters, cables, and photographs of Allan Nevins, documenting his life and career between 1912 and 1969. Also included are letters to Mary R. Nevins from Henry Steele Commager, A. L. Rowse, and others, about Nevins. In his undated letter to Peter and Barbara Long, Nevins describes meeting Andrey Vyshinsky, "the basest scoundrel, the most contemptible caitiff, in international life," and V. K. Krishna Menon, "whose intellectual distinction was apparent."

Penkower gift. Mr. Monty N. Penkower (A.M., 1964; Ph.D., 1970) has presented to the Libraries material dealing with the Federal Writers' Project and American literary magazines of the late 1930s and early 1940s. The fifteen items include issues of little magazines



Rockwell Kent, untitled drawing for Sears, Roebuck and Company War Bond series, 1942 (Jaffin gift)

such as the *Tramp*, with contributions by Witter Bynner, William Saroyan, and others; "Material Gathered on the Federal Writers' Project, San Francisco, As a Sample for a Project of Creative Work," 1936, mimeographed and unpublished, with contributions by Kenneth Rexroth; and mimeographed material relating to social-ethnic studies written by Benjamin A. Botkin, who was the national folklore editor for the Federal Writers' Project.

Roudiez gift. For addition to his papers, Professor Leon S. Roudiez (A.M., 1940; Ph.D., 1950) has added four letters from his colleague Jean Albert Bédé regarding the *Columbia Dictionary of*

Modern European Literature, one letter from Albert Camus, seven letters from the French writer Henri Massis regarding the manuscript of his book about the French writer and political theorist Charles Maurras, and one letter from Henri Peyre regarding his contribution to the *French Review*, which Professor Roudiez edited.

Weil gift. A gift of fourteen books, including thirteen handsomely printed by the Warwick Press, has been presented by Mr. James L. Weil. Among the Warwick books donated, all limited editions issued between 1976, the year of the founding of the press, and 1992, are: volumes of poetry by John Barr, Kenneth Hopkins, and Ron Massé; lectures and an essay on the founding of the press by Carol J. Blinn, the proprietor of the press; and Saint Francis of Assisi's *Canticle of the Sun*, one of forty copies bound in vellum, inscribed by Carol J. Blinn to Mr. Weil.

Wilbur gift. Professor Emeritus C. Martin Wilbur (A.M., 1933; Ph.D., 1941) has presented a copy of *Reminiscences of a China Buff*, 1992, one of thirty copies. This lively and detailed autobiography recounts his childhood in Japan and China, his work at the Field Museum, Chicago, and later at Columbia, as well as his trips to Asia and Europe.

Yerushalmi gift. To his past gifts of Hebrew and Judeo-Persian manuscripts and rare editions of the Talmud, Professor Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi (A.M., 1961; Ph.D., 1966) has presented two tractates from an eighteenth-century edition of the Talmud: *Tractate Shabbat*, Amsterdam, 1715, and *Tractate Yebamot*, Amsterdam, 1717; he has also donated an eighteenth-century Yemenite Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic manuscript miscellany of kabbalistic prayers and rituals, calendaric computations, medical writing, and liturgy.

Activities of the Friends

Winter Reception. The exhibition "From Russia to *Kiss Me, Kate*: The Careers of Sam and Bella Spewack" opened with a Friends reception on Wednesday afternoon, March 10. On view are over two hundred manuscripts, letters, first editions, photographs, memorabilia, programs, playbills, and posters depicting their remarkable collaborative achievements in the theater, as well as their activities as individual authors and journalists. Represented in the exhibition are seventeen plays, musicals, and documentary films, including *Boy Meets Girl*, *My Favorite Wife*, *Weekend at the Waldorf*, and their two collaborations with Cole Porter, *Kiss Me, Kate* and *Leave It to Me!*. Also on exhibit is a range of items, from the article by Bella in her junior high school magazine entitled "Little Suffragettes Voting," to Sam's lecture to the Phi Beta Kappa Association in 1960 on "The Anatomy of Humour." The exhibition, documented in a handsome catalog, will remain on view in the Kempner Exhibition Room through July 9.

Bancroft Awards Dinner. The Rotunda in Low Memorial Library was the setting for the annual Bancroft Awards Dinner, held on Wednesday evening, April 7, and presided over by Henry F. Graff, Chairman of the Friends. University Provost Jonathan R. Cole announced the winners of the 1993 awards for distinguished books in American history and diplomacy published in 1992: Charles Capper, *Margaret Fuller: An American Romantic Life, Volume I: The Private Years*, published by Oxford University Press; and Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War*, published by Stanford University Press. An award of four thousand dollars from funds provided by the Edgar A. and Frederic Bancroft Foundation was presented to the author of each book by the provost, and Mr. Graff presented citations to the publishers.

Future Meetings. The fall exhibition reception will be held on Wednesday afternoon, December 1; the winter exhibition reception will be held on March 2, 1994; and the Bancroft Awards Dinner is scheduled for April 6, 1994.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

RUDOLPH ELLENBOGEN is Assistant Librarian for Rare Books.

W. GREGORY GALLAGHER is the Librarian of the Century Association.

NATHANIEL KNIGHT is a Ph.D. candidate in history at Columbia.

BELLA COHEN SPEWACK collaborated with her husband, Sam Spewack, and with Cole Porter on *Kiss Me, Kate*.

* * *

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